

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 ACDA-12 HA-05 IO-13 SSM-03
TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
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ARA-10 EA-10 MCT-01 /135 W
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R 241611Z FEB 78
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 319
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 523

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IS, JO, SF
SUBJ: WEST BANK: PESSIMISM, HOPE AND FEAR

SUMMARY: THE WEST BANK IS CURRENTLY A MIXTURE OF DIFFERENT AND SOMETIMES CONTRADICTORY MOODS. MANY LEADERS ARE DISHEARTENED OVER WHAT THEY SEE AS THE FAILURE OF SADAT'S INITIATIVE. THEIR DISILLUSIONMENT HAS BEEN INTENSIFIED BY THE LARNACA DEBACLE AND, ESPECIALLY, THE ANTI-PALESTINIAN REACTION OF SADAT AND THE EGYPTIAN PUBLIC. US STOCK NOW HIGH AS A RESULT OUR STAND ON SETTLEMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION WILLINGNESS TO SELL PLANES TO ARABS AS WELL AS ISRAEL. DESPITE THE GLOOM, HOPE PERSISTS THAT A DIPLOMATIC BREAKTHROUGH WILL SOMEHOW OCCUR AS RESULT US EFFORTS. FINALLY, RECENT ASSASSINATIONS, SECURITY MEASURES AND THREATS HAVE SPREAD ATMOSPHERE OF FEAR AND INHIBITED FREE EXPRESSION.

1. MAYOR MUHAMMAD MULHIM OF HALHUL RECENTLY COMMENTED THAT
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SADAT'S INITIATIVE WAS "DEAD." EGYPT COULD NOT MAKE PROGRESS WITHOUT HUSSEIN AND PALESTINIANS AND THESE COULD NOT MAKE MOVE UNLESS BEGIN CHANGED HIS POSITION ON WEST BANK AND PALESTINIANS. PROSPECT WAS FOR EXTENDED DEADLOCK.

2. US STOCK HAS BEGUN TO RISE AGAIN AS A RESULT SECRETARY'S STATEMENT ON SETTLEMENTS AND PRESIDENT'S DECISION TO SELL

PLANES TO EGYPT AND SAUDI ARABIA AS WELL AS ISRAEL. MANY SEE
UPCOMING CARTER-BEGIN MEETING AS A POTENTIAL WATERSHED, BUT
ARE NOTICEABLY PESSIMISTIC AS TO PROSPECTS FOR EARLY
PROGRESS.

3. ALTHOUGH MULHIM'S SENTIMENTS ON SADAT'S INITIATIVE ARE
SHARED BY OTHER WEST BANK LEADERS, THERE IS ALSO AN
UNDERLYING HOPE THAT SOMEHOW A MIRACLE WILL OCCUR WHICH
WILL RESULT IN A DIPLOMATIC BREAKTHROUGH. ALTHOUGH
PROFESSING PESSIMISM, WEST BANKERS HOPING US WILL EFFECT
CHANGE IN ISRAELI POSITION.

4. RECENT SPATE OF ASSASSINATIONS IN RAMALLAH AREA, THREATS
AND COUNTER-THREATS HAVE CREATED CLIMATE OF FEAR ON WEST
BANK. NORMALLY VOCAL MAYORS ARE STAYING QUIET. IN WAKE OF
FATAL BOMBINGS IN JERUSALEM, ISRAELIS HAVE STEPPED UP SECURITY
MEASURES AND THIS IS ALSO HAVING A GENERAL DAMPENING EFFECT
ON THE FREE EXPRESSION OF POLITICAL VIEWS.
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